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## Useless Anachronism For A Complex World

A petition that reeks of square-rigged fighting ships and cutlass-bearing seamen has been filed with Congress by a former agent of more modern methods of warfare.

Lyle H. Munson, who served both the Office of Strategic Services and the Central Intelligence Agency, has asked Congress for "letters of marque" authorizing him to go privateering amid the complex currents of the cold war. Munson's petition was intended primarily to emphasize the lack of direct action by the government in freeing Americans

now held behind the Iron Curtain and in Cuba.

But its simplicity and glamour were too great to be dismissed without a nostalgic sigh in a world weary with the niceties of 20th century international dealings. Munson's was a plan for action. And tens of persons here and abroad heaved their nostalgic sighs by offering to support it.

Actually, the Constitutional provision empowering Congress to issue letters of marque hasn't been used since the War of 1812. Except for the value of privateers to this country when it had no appreciable naval force, the United States probably would have joined in the 1856 declaration that virtually ruled out use of privateers by all other major powers.

Later international conferences added restrictions to the practice of privateering. But no international law on the subject is really necessary.

The results implicit in Munson's own blithe description of how he might descend on East Berlin, free the Americans held there and lead them out is insurance enough that no nation today will consider turning such semi-official military agents loose in the world.

Even substituting the carbine for a cutlass and a helicopter for the square-rigger, the privateer is a useless anachronism in a world made as complex as the nuclear weapons that dominate it.

CPYRGHT